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C O N F I D E N T I A L ABIDJAN 000771

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/18/2016  
TAGS: PGOV ELAB ASEC KPKO IV  
SUBJECT: COTE D'IVOIRE: TEACHERS RESUME STRIKE

REF: A. ABIDJAN 691

B. ABIDJAN 768

Classified By: Poloff Phaedra Gwyn for reason 1.4 b&d

¶11. (SBU) Primary and secondary school teachers, who suspended their strike June 20 after meeting with President Gbagbo (ref A), are threatening to resume the strike July 18. The teachers said at the time that their demands had not been met but that they would suspend the strike to allow for further negotiations. However, even though the Prime Minister promised to meet two of the teachers' three demands, the government has taken no action on any of them since June 20.

¶12. (SBU) The teachers are demanding a housing allowance for primary school teachers, more opportunities for advancement, and the creation of an office to assure that teachers will be promptly paid for proctoring and grading exams. This last demand is particularly key as the exam season begins. In the past, it has taken a year or more for teachers to be paid for proctoring and correcting the exams. This year, they are demanding that the government agree in advance to set up a special office at each examination site, where teachers can collect their payment immediate after they finish. This is one of the two demands the Prime Minister agreed to meet, but nothing has been done and now the day of the first exams, the baccalaureate, has arrived. There has been no official statement from the government since the teachers announced July 14 that they would resume the strike.

¶13. (U) Over 100,000 students were scheduled to start their oral baccalaureate exams in the government-controlled south today, July 18, followed by the written portion on July 25. The Minister of Education decided that students in the New Forces zone would take their exams separately, in August. Lower level secondary and primary school exams were scheduled for later in the summer.

¶14. (C) Comment: The government has run up arrears to so many different groups of its citizens that it can ill afford to give priority to one group over the others. In any case, the teachers' unions are out of favor with the Education Minister, who is from President Gbagbo's FPI (Ivoirian Popular Front) party, because of their strikes and vociferous protests. In itself the teachers' strike might be a relatively small distraction against the backdrop of the worsening national political crisis, but it gave the thuggish pro-Gbagbo students' union an excuse to attack the premises of Ivoirian Radio and Television (Ref B) and it is undermining the Prime Minister. End Comment.  
Hooks